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**TERM PAPER TOPIC:**

**PERCEPTION OF STUDENTS ON HARASSMENT IN HIGHER INSTITUTIONS**

**BY**

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**DEDICATION**

This term paper is dedicated to God Almighty for his numerous mercies, protection and strength on me to carry out this work

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**Abstract**

Sexual harassment has been defined as a non-consensual and unwelcome sexual behaviour that affects lives of the victims. Approximately 50% of all women in the in Nigeria and other African countries at some time or other experience some type of sexual harassment, either in the workplace or in academic environments. Sexual harassment has been identified as the most frequent form of “sexual victimization” and as a category of violence against women. Sexual harassment has also been described as a form of social control exerted by men to “keep women in their place.” The Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW) Beijing Declaration (UN documents, 2004) included Sexual harassment in its category of “physical, sexual, and psychological” violence against women. The harassments included rude sexual jokes, showing/passing pornographic materials, indecent gestures, attitudes, behaviours, insults and touches resulting in discrimination against the victims by violating their rights physiologically, sexually and physically. Many institutions of Higher Learning, has no policy guidelines to assist institution managers in handling sexual harassment issues.

**CHAPTER ONE**

**INTRODUCTION**

**1.1 Meaning of Sexual Harassment (SH)**

Sexual harassment can be defined as any deliberate pestering or molestation towards an individual sexually which violates their right as individuals.

The American Association of University Women (AAUW) defines SH as a non-consensual and unwelcome sexual behavior that affects lives of the victims. This definition emphasizes the consequences and implications of sexual harassment, and distinguishes it from consensual behaviors such as flirting, kissing and touching. Forms of sexual harassment vary a lot, which transverse from one end of physical sexual assault to the other end of the non-verbal sex cues. In the era of information explosion today, internet and related social networking enhance the occurrence of sexual harassment due to the fact that harassers can rapidly abuse others anonymously without restriction in a specific physical location. Commonly, they believe that they will not be liable to legal responsibilities. Fitzgerald (1993), in a landmark article, stated that approximately 50% of all women in Nigeria and most African countries at some time would experience a type of sexual harassment, either in the workplace or in academic environments. The Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW) Beijing Declaration (UN documents, 2004) included sexual harassment in its category of “physical, sexual, and psychological” violence against women. There are many grey areas regarding sexual harassment perceived by adolescent peers. Most sexual harassment is perpetrated by male students against female students. However, there are also cases of harassment by women against men, and of same sex harassment perpetrated by either sex. Other than campus environment, sexual harassment is common at every stage of education. Sexual harassment on campus commonly occurs among peers and most students who experience it do not report what has happened. The dynamics of sexual harassment often involve an aggressor who holds a position of power over the victim, which include men against women, senior students against junior students, and in a teacher-student relationship. Moreover, those sexually harassed students can be targeted for retaliation if they report the cases, by both their peers and school employees.

**1.2 Types of Sexual Harassment:**

The American Association of University Women (2005) conducted a survey among college students and found that forms of Sexual harassment involved sexual jokes; comments on body, look and private life; intentional touching of others; and sexual gestures or looks. More male students than female students were victims in some forms of sexual harassment. For example, 37% of the male students claimed that they were called homosexual, whereas 13% of the female students faced this type of verbal harassment. In general, researchers found that girls were more frequently harassed than boys (Young et al., 2008). Sexual harassment was so common that when it happened, many girls did not become aware of its occurrence (Leaper & Brown, 2008; Pepler et al., 2006). Although physical harassment was less frequent than verbal harassment, students who had experienced physical harassment were adversely affected (AAUWEF, 2001). Junior and senior secondary school students were often teased as homosexuals by their peers and the harassment brought negative influences on these teenagers under attack (GLSEN, 2005). Timmerman (2005) conducted a similar survey on students in Netherlands and found that most harassers were classmates rather than teaching staff. Some research works also revealed that most victims would not lodge complaints or inform relevant departments/agencies in response to (AAUWEF, 2011). In relation to online sexual harassment, research findings showed that almost all the above group were connected to the Internet in some ways. Nowadays, there are diverse types of online and social media, including common social networking such as Facebook, Twitters, Google+ and MySpace; multi-media sharing such as YouTube, Flickr and Picasa; professional networking such as LinkedIn, Classroom2.0, Nurse Connect and SQL Monster; emails, SMS, and multi-functional modes of mobile phone comprising photo-taking, video-recording, WhatsApp, etc. All of the messages are transmitted away with great speeds. About 20-40% of students from first year to second year (ages-12-17) have experienced some forms of cyber bullying in the Internet and social networking (Tokunaga, 2010). Alarmingly, Sexual harassment is regarded as a common phenomenon in cyber bullying (Shariff & Strong-Wilson, 2005). Internet and related social networking enhance the occurrence of sexual harassment due to the fact that harassers can rapidly abuse others anonymously without restriction in a specific physical locale. Commonly, they believe that they will not be liable to legal responsibilities (Chaffin, 2008). It is noteworthy that the local organization “Prevent Child Abuse” had conducted a survey in 2004 which revealed that in one month alone, 44% of the students received indecent and obscene messages online. Out of them, 79% deleted the obscene and indecent messages, but 8% would continue to browse and 6% would hesitate to browse or not. To deal with online sexual harassment, students had to face the issue alone by themselves. They seldom informed their parents (21%) or friends (19%)

**1.3 Meaning of higher institutions:**

According to Igi-global (2019), higher institution is a level of education that is provided by universities, vocational universities, community colleges, liberal arts colleges, institutes of technology and other collegiate level **institutions**, such as vocational schools, trade schools and career colleges, that award academic degrees or professional certifications.

**Higher education** is tertiary education leading to award of an [academic degree](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Academic_degree). Higher education, also called **post-secondary education**, third-level or [tertiary education](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tertiary_education), is an optional final stage of [formal learning](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Formal_learning) that occurs after completion of [secondary education](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Secondary_education). It represents levels 6, 7 and 8 of the [2011 version](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ISCED#2011_version) of the [International Standard Classification of Education](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Standard_Classification_of_Education) structure. [Tertiary education](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tertiary_education) at a non-degree level is sometimes referred to as [further education](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Further_education) or [continuing education](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Continuing_education) as distinct from higher education.

Since [World War II](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_II), developed and many developing countries have increased the participation of the age group who mostly studies higher education from the elite rate, of up to 15 per cent, to the mass rate of 16 to 50 per cent. In many developed countries, participation in higher education has continued to increase towards universal or, what Trow later called, open access, where over half of the relevant age group participate in higher education. Higher education is important to national [economies](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economy), both as an industry, in its own right, and as a source of trained and educated personnel for the rest of the economy. College educated workers have commanded a measurable wage premium and are much less likely to become unemployed than less educated workers. (Wikipedia 2020)

The general higher education and training that takes place in a [university](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University), [college](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/College), or [Institute of technology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Institute_of_technology) usually includes significant [theoretical](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theory) and abstract elements, as well as applied aspects. In contrast, the vocational higher education and training that takes place at [vocational universities and schools](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vocational_university) usually concentrates on [practical applications](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Practice_(learning_method)), with very little theory.

**CHAPTER TWO**

**2.0 REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON SEXUAL HARRASMENT IN HIGHER INSTITUTIONS.**

Some two decades after the federal courts first recognized sexual harassment as a form of sex discrimination, debate still continues about what sexual harassment is, why it might be sex discrimination, and what law can and should do about it.

Sexual harassment is a social practice. Social practices have lives, institutional lives and semiotic lives. And so social practices like sexual harassment have histories. Considering sexual harassment in historical perspective allows us to ask some fundamental questions about the nature of the practice, the terms in which it has been contested, and the rules and rhetorics by which law constrains-or enables-the conduct in question.

For the first time in history, women extracted from law the means to fight a practice with which they had been struggling for centuries. And yet, when we consider this development from a historical vantage point, it becomes plain that legal recognition of sexual harassment as sex discrimination was at one and the same time a process of misrecognition-involving a sometimes strange account of the practice in issue. On a moment's reflection, this is not terribly surprising. When law recognizes the harms inflicted by social practices, it is intervening in the social world it is describing, both enabling and constraining challenges to the social order of which the practices are a part.

The practice of sexual harassment is centuries old -at least. Sexual harassment was an entrenched feature of chattel slavery endured by African-American women without protection of law. While there were crucial differences in the situation of free women employed in domestic service, they, too, commonly faced sexual advances by men of the households in which they worked. Surviving accounts of women employed in manufacturing and clerical positions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries also point to a variety of contexts in which men imposed sexual relations-ranging from assault to all manner of unwanted physical or verbal advances- on women who worked for them.

As a social practise, the occurrence of sexual harassment got extended into the higher institutions through the advancement of higher institutions from the early centuries. It was believed that in the early century’s cases of sexual harassment was witnessed at some stages in the development of higher institutions, but due to the absence of enabling law and fear of intimidation by the sexually harassed victims, such cases were not recorded or reported to the relevant authorities and the culprits usually went scot free.

**CHAPTER THREE**

**3.0 PERCEPTION OF STUDENTS ON SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN HIGHER INSTITUTIONS**

The perception of students on sexual harassment in higher intuitions includes students’ view of what sexual harassment entails, some of the root causes of sexual harassment and their knowledge about sexual harassment in general. Some of these perceptions are discussed below:

* **Attitude of University management and students towards sexual harassment.**

Both teachers and social workers consider that institution address the issue in a low-key manner in order to uphold their reputation. The general attitude is “don‟t make a mountain out of a molehill”. It should be understood that not dealing with sexual harassment does not mean its disappearance. Indeed, effective ways of dealing with sexual harassment involve the collaboration of the Government, staffs and lecturers, parents, students and stakeholders in the community. As such, students can follow formal complaint procedures or legal means to solve the sexual harassment problems so that sexual harassers should receive appropriate punishment and counselling.

* **Perception of students on sexual harassment in higher institutions based on gender**

In general, more female students than male students consider sexual behaviours as sexual harassment. Sexual harassment, in terms of the forms, involves people of opposite sexes, of same sex and in a group. Among female students, who had been sexually harassed, they experienced “A male bothered by asking for dates, though you had answered „no‟”, “A male continuously made suggestions, propositions, or demands to you for sexual favours or sexual relationship”, and “A male rubbed or touched against you on purpose”. Among male students, who had been sexually harassed, they experienced “Two or more males talked about sex all the time in your presence”. Moreover, “Someone made sexual jokes about you” mostly occurred in social groups.

* **Effects of sexual harassment on students’ academic performance at the institution**

When the students encounter sexual harassment, most of them show symptoms of Feeling angry, Feeling afraid or scared and cannot relate well with others. However, fewer students express that their daily life will be affected, such as Sleep disturbances and eating disorders. On one hand, more female students are affected psychologically and emotionally, when compared to male students. On the other hand, more male students than female students are affected in daily life and interpersonal relationship. They include cannot relate well with others, inability study well and eating disorders. There are discrepancies between how the students understand the definition of sexual harassment and their actual responses in real life situations. In the course of determining whether certain behaviours are actually sexual harassment, the students are more concerned about the motives and mentality of the perpetrators. Since most incidents of sexual Harassment involves friends or classmates, the victims find that it is somewhat difficult to differentiate the harassers‟ intention. There are times when the students even think that the behaviours form part of the school ethos or a playful culture, with verbal sexual harassment in particular. Students indicate that the current education on sexual harassment is inadequate.

**CHAPTER FOUR:**

**4.0 CAUSES OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN HIGHER INSTITUTIONS**

Some of the major causes of sexual harassment in higher institutions varies based on certain variables, but in general it is believed that there are some general causes or factors which leads to sexual harassment especially in higher institutions. They include:

# **Aggressiveness**

Men in groups often behave differently from how they would as individuals. This can explain some of the "gang harassment" that occurs when a woman enters a hall or walks past a group of workers at lunch; after a few drinks at an office party; or when a group of colleagues attend a conference. Alone, those men would probably be “harmless”, or less bold.

* **Credibility and victim-blaming**

The credibility of the victim is often called into question, as it is usually her word against that of the harasser/s. (Although dealing with rape rather than harassment, the film *The Accused* was a striking example of victim-blaming and male solidarity trying to defeat justice, similar to what often happens in the case of harassment.) Several factors aggravate this problem:

# **Socialisation**

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The way in which men and women were brought up to see themselves and others strongly influences their behaviour. Various viewpoints could create a climate that allows sexual harassment

* **Power games**

Recent social and political changes have changed power relations. Some men feel threatened by the career advancement of women and people of colour, or are uncomfortable with women's new-found independence and assertiveness at home and / or at work. Others who have recently gained positions of power (many after decades of discrimination) may also harass women subordinates to prove themselves. Some men even regard it as a "fringe benefit" to which their position, their power, their sex entitle them. In times of uncertainty, fear, limited promotion opportunities, retrenchments, personal stress and performance pressure, there is a real danger that sexual harassment and trading of sexual favours will form part of the power games played.

**CHAPTER FIVE**

**5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

Higher institutions should develop a policy to address sexual harassment. This policy should give a clear definition on sexual harassment so that staffs, lecturers and social workers know how to handle sexual harassment cases. The system of complaint-handling should serve to safeguard the basic rights of tutors and students, as well as their gender equity and equality. In operation, the system should uphold the principles of fairness, transparency and protection of privacy, and the authority to discipline.

With reference to the universities, mechanisms should be established in order to handle complaint cases. Concurrently, all students should understand clearly about the complaint procedures (e.g., relevant information uploaded on the school website). Moreover, appropriate channels should be provided for students who can seek help in confidence.

Once the policy is set, the higher institutions should enforce the policy, with proper mechanism to monitor the implementation and review the policy from time to time, in order to ensure the efficacies of its implementation

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